



FEMA

Fact Sheet

## Comprehensive Assessment System

### Background

In 2003, Homeland Security Presidential Directive-8: National Preparedness (HSPD-8) called for establishing a system that would assess the Nation's overall preparedness and provide an annual status report of national preparedness. Three years later, the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) included requirements to establish a "comprehensive system to assess, on an ongoing basis, the Nation's prevention capabilities and overall preparedness."

Efforts are now underway to develop such a system: a system that will effectively assess prevention, response, and recovery capabilities at the State, Tribal, and local jurisdictional level, eliminate redundant data calls, reduce the burden on respondents, ensure the collection of meaningful data to guide policy and resource allocation decisions, and ultimately answer the basic question: "How prepared are we for a major disaster?"

The National Preparedness Directorate (NPD) within FEMA is charged with developing the Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS). The CAS will, as mandated by PKEMRA 649 (c) (1-4), assess compliance with the national preparedness system, the National Incident Management System (NIMS), and other related plans; assess capability levels against target levels; assess resource needs to meet target levels; and assess the performance of training, exercises, and operations. The first CAS survey is scheduled to be released to the stakeholder community in summer 2009.

### CAS Evolution

The CAS will function as a central repository for national preparedness data. In its first iteration, the system will integrate data from prior reports and legacy assessment systems to reduce the need for duplicative data calls. The first CAS survey will address questions about current capabilities that have not already been answered through other assessments and reports, focusing on key measures drawn from the 37 capabilities set forth in the Target Capabilities List (TCL) 2.0. The survey will be web-based, using the National Incident Management System Compliance Assistance Support Tool (NIMSCAST). NIMSCAST is a nationally-used online assessment tool that most respondents will already be familiar with.

Over time the CAS will evolve to integrate the TCL 3.0 Capability Frameworks currently being developed by NPD. Once completed, the TCL 3.0 Capability Frameworks will establish tasks and performance measures tailored to the needs of jurisdictions with varying characteristics, creating risk-informed jurisdictional "tiers." Thus, in future iterations, the CAS will ensure that assessment of jurisdictions is based on appropriate target levels for each capability. The CAS will help answer the basic questions: "Are we as prepared as we should be?" and "What should our priorities be to close identified gaps?"





### Benefits

By operating as a single system, the CAS will offer a variety of benefits for users at all levels of government. These benefits include:

- **Meaningful Data:** The results of the assessment will help to support and improve current FEMA programs such as the Grant Programs Directorate's Cost-to-Capability (C2C) Initiative, and will provide valuable data to inform the annual National Preparedness Report. State, Tribal, and local jurisdictions will obtain data that can be used to justify preparedness investments, make more informed decisions about what training and exercise programs are warranted, and foster regional collaboration.
- **Streamlined Reporting Process:** The CAS streamlines State, Tribal, and local reporting requirements using a format and interface that will be familiar to Stakeholders across the country: NIMSCAST. The NIMSCAST public reporting burden is estimated at five hours, which is significantly lower than most other legacy evaluation systems.

- **Single System:** As a single, integrated assessment system, the CAS both incorporates and builds upon current data, increasing the quality and accuracy of the system while eliminating redundancy and lightening the overall reporting burden. Respondents will assess preparedness using a single set of standardized measures, addressing the capability elements of planning, organization/teams, equipment, training, and exercises, and thereby facilitating a common, nationwide approach to preparedness assessments.

The CAS helps officials gauge readiness to prevent, respond to, and recover from all-hazards events. Utilizing a capability-based approach, the system provides valuable information to help stakeholders set policy priorities, allocate limited resources, and further streamline current and future reporting and analytical efforts. Moreover, the CAS enables an integrated, scalable picture of capabilities to guide preparedness policy decisions at every level of government.

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*FEMA leads and supports the nation in a risk-based, comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation, to reduce the loss of life and property and protect the nation from all hazards including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.*

